FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Peacekeeper in Rail Garrison and Small ICBM Flight Test Program Environmental Assessment (EA) is an analysis of the environmental impacts associated with the testing of the Peacekeeper/Rail Garrison and the Small Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) basing mode vehicles and missiles at Vandenberg Air Force Base (AFB), California. The current Rail Garrison train baseline configuration consists of a standard diesel locomotive, two security cars, two missile launch cars, a launch control car, a maintenance car, and up to six commercial cars. The test vehicle for the Small ICBM is a prototype of the Hard Mobile Launcher (HML) which is nearly 105 feet long, 14 feet wide, and nine feet high with a gross weight of about 100 tons and powered by standard diesel fuel engines. The proposed action consists of testing the train and the Small ICBM Mobile Test Bed (MTB) vehicle at Vandenberg AFB on the San Antonio Terrace, with some HML mobility testing on and off base roads and on a Minuteman Missile Launch Facility site. A variety of tests would be conducted on new and existing roads and railroads, and designated land areas with various configurations of the weapon systems in an effort to simulate potential operational scenarios. The test program would require some new facility construction on previously surveyed M-X locations and would require about 115 construction personnel during peak construction activities. The five year test programs would have a peak-year employment of about 340 test personnel. The planned test period for both systems is from mid-1988 through 1992. Due to operational considerations, there are no alternatives to the proposed action. Under the no action alternative, the Air Force would not test the Peackeeper/Rail Garrison or Small ICBM and there would be no impacts. However, sufficient data would not be available to adequately address the effectiveness of the systems, jeopardizing the evaluation of these basing modes and ultimate deployment.

IMPACTS

Physical Environment: The EA concludes that minor, nonsignificant impacts would occur on the physical environment in the biological, air quality, noise, and earth resource areas. Some disturbance of wildlife and vegetation is anticipated; however, the impacts to wildlife would be temporary and impacts to vegetation would be mitigated through a five-year revegetation and monitoring program. There would be no impacts on any federal or state recognized endangered species. Therefore, impacts to plants and wildlife would not be significant. Impacts to wetlands would occur since approximately 1.7 acres of wetlands would be filled for construction of facilities and rail lines. In accordance with the Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, a nationwide permit has been granted by the Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District. This permit requires wetlands that are filled to be replaced at a ratio of two acres created for every acre filled. Impacts to wetlands would be mitigated. Mitigation will include a dunes management plan, exotic plant removal, rehabilitation of the aquatic wildlife refuge and other environmental improvements mentioned in the Environmental Assessment.

The proposed action would cause a temporary increase in fugitive dust and vehicle emissions in the project areas. Testing would cause a limited, temporary increase in noise levels in the immediate vicinity of the test vehicles and train; however, the facilities and rail line would be located in a remote operational area of the base and noise level increases would not impact local residential communities. The impacts would not be significant.

HML mobility operations would also cause limited, but not significant, soil erosion in the limited locations of the project areas. Most of these areas have been previously disturbed and control measures would be undertaken to control erosion. No discernible environmental effects will be experienced for hydrological resources.

Human Environment: Impacts to the human environment will not be significant. Of the 340 technical support personnel about 140 are already in the area, the remaining 200 personnel will require housing, utilities, transportation and limited support from private and public facilities. Analyses demonstrates that the local communities have the ability to absorb this slight increase of personnel and impacts will be negligible. At least sixteen cultural sites which have historic and prehistoric significance and are potentially National Register eligible have been identified in the San Antonio Terrace area. Siting of the facilities for the proposed action would take these sites into consideration and all cultural sites would be avoided. Management of the cultural resources will be in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement among the United States Air Force, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the California Historic Preservation Office. Therefore, there would be no impacts to this resource. No other impacts are anticipated in the human environment.

Based on the analysis of identified environmental effects, the Air Force has found that the proposed action would not have significant environmental impacts. The environmental impact analysis requirements of the Air Force and the Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ) having been met, the Air Force has determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

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